THE THREE-FOLD SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLAMING EMOTIONS

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I – Introduction

Many philosophers working on moral responsibility follow P.F. Strawson (1982) in understanding claims about someone's moral responsibility or the phenomenon of holding people morally responsible in terms of the appropriateness of a certain class of emotions (Bennett 1980; Watson 1993; Wallace 1994; Fischer and Ravizza 1998; McKenna 1998; Macnamara 2009). But even those who would not follow Strawson in identifying moral responsibility attributions with the appropriateness of emotions hold that emotions do play a role in our moral responsibility practices (Scanlon 2008, 143). In spite of this, the significance of the blaming emotions for moral responsibility has been under-theorized. (I am concerned here with people's moral responsibility for their actions or omissions, rather than, for example, whether in general someone is a morally responsible person.)

In order to fully appreciate the import of the blaming emotions for moral responsibility we need a more adequate moral psychology. As an initial step, in this paper I appeal to recent work in psychology of emotion to argue that the blaming emotions—anger, resentment, and indignation—are significant for our moral responsibility practices in three different ways.[1] They are important to moral responsibility in *appraising* people as acting wrongfully, in *communicating* the appraisal to perceived wrongdoers, and in *sanctioning* people

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[1] While there are positive emotions that are connected to moral responsibility, I focus on the blaming emotions as they have received much more philosophical and psychological discussion than have candidate positive emotions like gratitude.

who are appraised as wrongful.[2] I also investigate the conditions of appropriateness of the

blaming emotions. My methodology is inspired by recent philosophical attention to reasons

for attitudes: for example, the reasons in favor of believing a proposition (Shah 2003) or

blaming another person (Hieronymi 2004). There has also been some attention—though not

nearly as much—to the reasons that bear on emotions (D'Arms and Jacobson 2000). As I

will demonstrate, the three ways in which the blaming emotions are significant for our moral

responsibility practices are associated with very different kinds of appropriateness

considerations.

My work is also inspired by the fact that although there has been significant recent

attention to the concept of moral responsibility, there is little agreement about it. Indeed, in

one recent attempt to clear the conceptual territory, John Martin Fischer and Neal

Tognazzini argue that there are up to *thirteen* different analytical or conceptual 'stages' of

moral responsibility attributions, organized (roughly) into two broad categories: attributibility

and accountability (2010). Here they are inspired by Gary Watson's (1996) distinction

between these two concepts, but urge that conceptual clarity about moral responsibility

requires far more distinctions.[3]

I am deeply sympathetic to the project of achieving clarity about our conception of

moral responsibility as it is central to making progress on some of our most vexing issues

about moral responsibility, including whether moral responsibility is compatible with

determinism. However, I fear that some recent attempts to introduce clarity risk further

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[2] An anonymous reviewer points out that these also correspond to three broad categories of
response to wrongdoing. I agree—in fact, I think we categorize responses to wrongdoing as
appraisals, communications, and sanctions in virtue of their connection with the blaming
emotions. Space precludes making that argument here.
[3] Fischer and Tognazzini's analysis places consideration of the blaming emotions squarely
into the accountability category. My analysis here complicates that categorization.

confusion because they have not paid sufficient attention to the moral psychology of the blaming emotions. Not only, then, do I try to enrich our moral psychological picture of the blaming emotions, but I also link appraisal, communication, and sanction to representative accounts of moral responsibility. I suggest that each kind of account is inspired by a different way in which the blaming emotions are significant, and thus each account implicitly emphasizes a different consideration of emotional appropriateness. Fittingness accounts of moral responsibility are linked to appraisal, moral address accounts correspond to the communicative dimension of the blaming emotions, and desert accounts of moral responsibility are inspired by the blaming emotions' sanctioning role. If I am right, part of the reason debates about moral responsibility have been so intractable is that many theorists share the assumption that appropriate blaming emotions are a reliable indicator of a person's moral responsibility, while inappropriate blaming emotions are evidence of a lack of moral responsibility. This makes it appear as if all parties to the debate are operating with the same conception of moral responsibility in mind. However, because different accounts are implicitly linked to different kinds of appropriateness, the wide agreement that the appropriateness of the blaming emotions is revealing of moral responsibility obscures significant disagreements about the concept and the conditions for its application that emerge with a more refined focus.[4]

While discussion of all of the blaming emotions is common, theorists often emphasize one or two to the exclusion of others. For example, R.J. Wallace speaks of indignation and resentment (Wallace 1994) as does Tamler Sommers (2007), while Derk

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[4] In his recent paper, "Attributability, Answerability, and Accountability: Toward a Wider Theory of Moral Responsibility" David Shoemaker offers a similar argument that distinguishes among moral responsibility concepts, though without a focus on the blaming emotions (2011).

Pereboom has remarked that "of all the attitudes associated with moral responsibility, it is anger that seems most closely connected with it" (Pereboom 2001, 208).[5] In what follows, I assume that from a psychological standpoint, resentment and indignation are ways of being angry.

II – Appraisal

An important strand of contemporary psychological research on emotion seeks to determine characteristic appraisals that are assumed to elicit distinctive emotions.[6] "Appraisal" refers to a person's evaluation or interpretation of a situation. According to this research, different emotions are caused by distinct appraisals. For example, Richard Lazarus claims that anger is produced by a person's appraisal of a "personal slight or demeaning offense" (1991, 223), while in a later collaboration with Craig Smith (1993), both believe that anger is caused by an appraisal of "other-blame," which they claim can be broken into three separate components: motivational relevance (the situation is personally relevant), motivational incongruence (the situation is inconsistent with what is desired), and other-accountability (the emotion is directed at someone else). Philosophers have roughly concurred. For example, Jesse Prinz and Shaun Nichols claim that "Anger arises when people violate *autonomy* norms, which are norms prohibiting harms against persons" (2010, 122). If we make the plausible assumption that slights and offenses both involve the violation of norms,

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[5] Most commonly, it appears that these different terms mark a difference in whether the object of the emotion is second or third-personal. For example, see (P. F. Strawson 1982; Wallace 1994; Sommers 2007; Pereboom 2009).

[6] While there has been much debate over whether or not the relevant appraisals are cognitive, beginning with (Zajonc 1980; Lazarus 1982) and continued in (Zajonc 1984; Lazarus 1984), that debate is orthogonal to my concerns. For an excellent recent discussion of this issue, see (Prinz 2004, 21–51).

we can see all these authors offering a roughly similar account of the appraisal involved with the blaming emotions, though they do disagree about how best to capture it.

While I agree that the blaming emotions have a characteristic appraisal, the above accounts make two errors regarding it. First, these accounts fail to pinpoint the characteristic appraisal of the blaming emotions. The early Lazarus, as well as Prinz and Nichols, construe the appraisal too narrowly. For example, blaming emotions are commonly elicited by harms against nonhuman animals, violations of religious commandments, the nonharmful breaking of promises and many other situations that go beyond slights and harms against persons.[7] On the other hand, the account from Lazarus and Smith is too broad; adding up their three appraisal components (an emotion directed toward a personally relevant situation that is inconsistent with what is desired) does not give us the characteristic appraisal of the *blaming emotions*. Such an appraisal is also compatible with sadness. We do better if we follow James Averill, who argues that "the typical instigation to anger is a value judgment. More than anything else, anger is an attribution of blame" (1983, 1150) or Shaver et al., who hold that the eliciting appraisal is that "the situation is illegitimate, wrong, unfair, contrary to what ought to be" (1987, 1078).

I propose, then, that the way a person feeling a blaming emotion appraises her situation is best captured as an appraisal of wrongful conduct. This is the core appraisal of the blaming emotions, but we can break it into constituent parts as follows:

If a person, A, feels a blaming emotion, she evaluates her situation as containing:

    (i)   a person, B,[8] whose

    (ii)   action or omission

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[7] Surprisingly, Prinz and Nichols themselves note the connection between blaming emotions and harms against nonhuman animals (2010, 130).

[8] In some situations A and B will be the same person.

(iii)   transgresses a norm on proper conduct (including, but not limited to, moral norms, though the norm need not be codifiable by a rule)

(iv)   because B is motivated by ill will or has shown insufficient concern,

(v)   and A glosses B's action as bad.[9]

This treatment of the appraisal dimension of the blaming emotions handles the fact that we often feel the blaming emotions in response to violations that don't harm persons, as well as the variety of situations where we feel blaming emotions because a person's action violates an autonomy norm, or is a demeaning offense or personal slight.

This is an improvement, but there is another error in the above treatments of the appraisal involved in the blaming emotions. All of the above treatments construe the relation between the appraisal and the blaming emotions as a causal relation. That is, the appraisal is what *brings about* the blaming emotion. This is the second mistake in the literature about the relation between the blaming emotions and their characteristic appraisal. Not all psychologists believe that appraisals always precede blaming emotions or are necessary for them; indeed there is not clear evidence that appraisals always cause episodes of the blaming emotions, though there is no question they often do (Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones 2004a; Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones 2004b; Parkinson 1999).

I think we better understand the psychology of a person feeling a blaming emotion if we hold that the blaming emotions need not be *caused* by their characteristic appraisal (though they often are). However they are caused, the blaming emotions *are* an appraisal of conduct as wrongful. Consider, by analogy, a particular belief: my belief that it is sunny outside. While my belief that it is sunny outside might be caused by present sun outdoors (if

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[9] I have in mind here the fact that anger has a distinctive unpleasant phenomenology that might be glossed as "feeling ready to explode" (Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994).

I was just outside and noticed the weather), that belief might be caused in a number of other ways. I might come to believe it is sunny outside based on your testimony or by inferring today's weather based on what the weather was yesterday. In these cases my belief that it is sunny outside isn't caused by occurrent sun. A similar point applies to the blaming emotions. While in many cases they are caused by their characteristic appraisal, their link to appraisal is better understood as conceptual (Parkinson 1997).

This analogy between beliefs and the blaming emotions is also relevant because it relates to our practice of taking our blaming emotions to be appropriate or inappropriate, depending on their aptness for the situation. The blaming emotions are not unique in this respect. As Justin D'Arms and Dan Jacobson have pointed out, we commonly argue about whether or not things are sad, enviable, shameful, or worthy of pride or resentment. Our practice of considering these issues of emotional appropriateness presupposes that we can make sense of whether or not an emotion's characteristic appraisal is accurate, or to use their terminology, *fitting* (2000). When a blaming emotion is fitting, it accurately presents its object as having the features contained by its appraisal; the fittingness of a blaming emotion is analogous to the epistemic relation that obtains between the world and a true belief. Anger, resentment, and indignation are fitting to feel when, for example, someone intentionally wrongs you out of ill will.

Thus, the blaming emotions are fitting when they are felt in response to a person who satisfies conditions (i)-(v), above. The lack of any one of the five conditions means that a blaming emotion is unfitting.[10] We can also distinguish between 'degrees' of fit between a

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[10] By distinguishing between the five conditions on the fittingness of a blaming emotion, I call our attention to conceptual distinctions. However, I allow that these different aspects of a blaming emotion's appraisal may often, or even always, affect each other in interesting ways. For example, it may be that someone's act motivated by ill will—even if she does

blaming emotion and the situation it appraises. I should be angrier with someone who tries to ruin my career than a neighbor who thoughtlessly mows his lawn at 8am on a Sunday morning. And you should be more upset with the driver who intentionally tries to run you over while you are out for a walk than you should be with a person who somewhat carelessly backs his car into your path. Thus, the seriousness of the wrong in question and the person's relation to the wrong both help to determine the amount of anger fitting for the situation.

III – Communication

   There is much psychological evidence to suggest that the blaming emotions not only appraise the conduct of others, but also play a role in communication. Specific speech patterns (including rate of articulation, intensity, and frequency of vocal fold vibrations) appear to be associated with different emotions, particularly anger (Scherer 1986; Scherer et al. 1991). Psychologists have also found that different bodily movements and postures are associated with different emotions (Wallbott 1998). Perhaps most probatively, the blaming emotions, just like many other emotions, are associated with characteristic facial expressions (Ekman 1999). Relevantly, while people commonly interpret the emotional facial expressions of others as signifying a person's appraisal of her situation, anger expressions are more likely than the expression of other emotions to be interpreted as conveying intentions or requests (Horstmann 2003). Also notably, the characteristic facial expressions of different emotions appear to be highly associated with interpersonal interaction. For example, winners on the medal stand at the Olympic games are more likely to smile during interactions with other people than during the rest of the ceremony (Fernández-Dols and Ruiz-Belda 1995) and

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something that I know has no chance of actually harming anyone—itself transgresses a norm on proper conduct and is therefore bad.

bowlers are less likely to smile when they first roll a strike than when they turn to face others watching at the end of the alley (Kraut and Johnston 1979).

In a typical interpersonal episode of a blaming emotion, various bodily, vocal, and facial responses communicate that the person feeling the emotion is angry and thereby give the person who is the target of the blaming emotion information about the way her conduct is being appraised. In many situations, this information is not contained in spoken words but is transmitted instead by the overall emotional demeanor of the person feeling the blaming emotion. These communicative aspects of a person's emotional demeanor are observed, responded to, or ignored by others. The responses of others—or the lack of a response—are then an opportunity for continued emotional engagement and transformation. Thus, in most interpersonal interactions, a person who feels a blaming emotion not only appraises the conduct of another as wrongful, she also communicates to the target of the blaming emotion that she construes his behavior as wrongful.[11]

In human psychological response, these communicative aspects are very closely connected to the having of the blaming emotion itself. It turns out to be almost impossible not to register your emotional state on your face in some way, even if briefly, and it is hardest to mask negative emotions (Porter and ten Brinke 2008). Since others are extremely attentive to such displays, it is often better to try not to have the emotion than to allow the emotion to run its course while attempting to mask what you feel. Thus, I want to suggest that the communicative significance of the blaming emotions can sometimes result in their being inappropriate to feel even when they fittingly appraise a target. That is, there are

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[11] To be clear, I am not arguing that the communication of this information is intentional on the part of the person feeling the blaming emotion, only that the information is "there for the taking." Along similar lines, the signals that indicate which play is being called by a team may transmit the same information to the opposing team if the opposing team has attended to which signals are reliable signs of particular plays.

additional considerations that bear on whether to have a blaming emotion than merely considerations of fit. In characterizing communicative considerations that bear on emotional appropriateness, I am inclined to follow Angela Smith in distinguishing between considerations of standing, the degree of fault displayed in the wrongful action, and the response that the blamed person takes (or will, or could take) to the person who feels the blaming emotion.[12]

Whether or not someone has proper standing, or authority, to feel what would be a fitting blaming emotion toward a wrongdoer has much to do with her relationship to the wrongdoer and those who are wronged. So, for example, even though I may observe what I regard as condescending and obnoxious behavior from one of two parties having a public argument, I may be inappropriately angry with the offending party if I have no social connection to either one of them. We can see this more clearly when we consider that it would not be uncommon for the victim of the obnoxious behavior to become angry with me when my indignation on his behalf becomes known.

My own fault and hypocrisy can also affect my standing to react to another's conduct with a blaming emotion. Thus, if my awareness of its health effects has not moderated my long-time smoking habit, my friend with a drinking problem will regard as out-of-line my fitting anger at him for neglecting his health when he succumbs to the temptation to drink. My friend's failing, just as my own, may be a legitimately moral one, but the fact that I am unable or unwilling to similarly guide my own behavior makes it inappropriate to feel angry toward him even though anger is fitting for what he does.

Beside the fact that the communicative appropriateness of the blaming emotions can be undermined by my standing to have such responses, it can also be affected by the relative

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[12] My discussion of these three issues is indebted to (A. M. Smith 2007, 478–483)

significance of the fault a person displays in her conduct. Thus, while a blaming emotion would fittingly appraise a student who fails to keep his scheduled appointment with me, the degree of fault (simple forgetfulness) and the degree of harm to me (a very mild inconvenience) prohibit me from feeling any resentment toward him. We can see this interact with another communicatively salient factor—the agent's own response—if we suppose that the student rushes over to my office, apologizing profusely even as he walks in the door. The student's self-reproach indicates that he understands he did wrong and is committed to doing what he can to prevent it from occurring in the future. While being indignant would fittingly appraise his faulty conduct, I should not feel indignant toward him because it would be communicatively inappropriate for me to target him with a blaming emotion given his indication that he understands his error and the importance of keeping appointments.[13] (Of course, things might be different if this same student has routinely missed appointments even while protesting that it will never happen again.)

In such a case, we again have a communicative reason against feeling a blaming emotion, even though the blaming emotions fittingly appraise the actions of the person in the situation.

IV – Sanction

Another way in which the blaming emotions are significant for our moral responsibility practices relates to communication but is ultimately distinct, namely, affecting the behavior of others by imposing costs.[14] While this is sometimes accomplished via the

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[13] For an analysis of the communicative dimension of emotions supporting this claim, see (Macnamara forthcoming).

[14] I am not arguing that such costs are always intended by the person feeling the blaming emotion, though they certainly sometimes are.

communication of a message, at other times it is accomplished simply through changing the costs and benefits of another person's possible actions. Though the relationship between the blaming emotions, deliberation, and action-aimed-at-sanction is complex, in this section I will highlight some of the relevant psychological findings to demonstrate the connection of the blaming emotions to sanction.

Anger has important effects on deliberation and social perception that play a role in determining the behavior of someone feeling a blaming emotion (though the effects vary across individuals, depending on their level of awareness and cognitive skills). Angry people tend to have a sense of significant control (Lerner and Keltner 2000) that leads them to be optimistic about the success of their probable actions (Lerner and Keltner 2001). They are also "eager to make decisions and are unlikely to stop and ponder or carefully analyze" (Lerner and Tiedens 2006, 132), which likely leads them to take actions that have a low probability of succeeding but high payoffs (Leith and Baumeister 1996). When they act, angry people tend to be more punitive toward those they blame (Lerner, Goldberg, and Tetlock 1998).[15]

We can see these deliberative effects demonstrated in experimental work on altruistic punishment and ultimatum games. In altruistic punishment, the punisher receives no material benefit but imposes a cost on the party punished. Thus, people are willing to punish free-riders even when it is costly for them to do so and they cannot expect future benefits from punishing (Fehr and Gächter 2000). Jonathan Haidt has argued that a paradigm feature of human morality is this third-party enforcement of moral norms (2001). In one significant study, Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter (2002) demonstrated that free-riding on a common

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[15] For an excellent overview of recent empirical study of anger's effects on judgment and decision-making, see (Litvak et al. 2010).

good is less prevalent when altruistic punishment of free-riders is possible. When such punishment occurs, it is reported by punishers to express their anger and those who are punished perceive their punishers as angry.[16] A similar finding concerns experimental work on ultimatum games. In such two-person games, one party (suppose it's me) controls some resources (say, $10) and makes an offer to another to split the resources in a particular fashion with another party ($8 for me, $2 for you). You have the opportunity to accept or reject the offer. Although game theory would predict that the splits offered should heavily favor the person controlling the resources and that all offers should be accepted, people tend to offer more than 40% of the resources and 15 to 20% of offers are rejected (Ochs and Roth 1989). The most perspicuous explanation of this behavior is that people expect the splits to be fair; if they are not, the split is angrily rejected even though the rejection leaves the rejector worse off than had she accepted (Pillutla and Murnighan 1996). Because offerers anticipate the possibility of sanctioning reactions, they tend to offer more equitable splits.

I've been using *sanction* to specifically demarcate the cost-imposing function of the blaming emotions from the communicative aspect. As I argued above, one function of the blaming emotions is to communicate appraisals to others. While one way to bring about a change in another person's behavior is to successfully communicate an appraisal to them, the communication will ultimately only be successful if the other is willing to appraise herself as acting wrongfully and see her wrongness as a reason for change, apology, or restitution. However, even if the other person is unwilling or unable to see herself as acting wrongfully, placing a cost on particular ways she might behave can impact her chosen course of action. The threat of sanction can lead someone to refrain from a wrongful action not yet

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[16] Notably, angry sanctions lead to positive behavior change even when free-riders interact with a new group of people that does not include their previous punishers.

performed, not repeat a wrong he already performed, or not copy the successful wrongdoing of others. Importantly, I also assume that expressions of the blaming emotions, themselves, are experienced as sanctions by the emotion's target. Not only is it unpleasant in its own right to be the target of another person's blaming emotion, but Baumeister et al. suggest that one function of the blaming emotions may be to stimulate guilt in the person who is the target of the emotion (2007, 189). Thus, people tend to avoid actions that they know would lead to being the target of the blaming emotions of others in order to avoid psychological and physical sanctions.[17]

There are a number of considerations that bear on the appropriateness of the blaming emotions qua sanction, some of which we have touched on already. Again, the lesson is that the question of whether a blaming emotion is appropriate, all things considered, is not solely determined by whether or not the blaming emotion fittingly appraises someone's conduct. For example, the propriety of sanctioning someone with a blaming emotion can be affected by the seriousness of the wrong done. Just as with communicative appropriateness, some extremely minor wrongs ought not be responded to, while the propriety of sanctioning a wrongdoer may increase with the seriousness of the wrong.[18] The person's own repentance, or lack thereof, is relevant because sanctioning an already repentant person may be unnecessary to affect his future conduct.

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[17] Again, note that while the sanctioning effects of the blaming emotions are at least sometimes directly intended by people who feel a blaming emotion (Fehr and Gächter 2000), they need not always be. However, even if people feeling blaming emotions do not intend that their emotions be experienced as harms by the targets of the blaming emotion, that doesn't mean they are not experienced as such by the targets.

[18] I say 'may' increase because I am doubtful that the relative deservingness of a wrongdoer, itself, is a sufficient reason to license a sanction for her. Explaining why would require that I develop a theory of desert and deservingness, which is a topic for elsewhere. For reasons why I am skeptical that desert can be a sufficient justification for sanctions, see (Dolinko 1991a; Dolinko 1991b).

As each of us has only limited motivational and actional resources, the appropriateness of a blaming emotion qua sanction can also be affected by what other wrongs you might plausibly respond to. For example, you do better to get angry with the perpetrators of wrongs when you might successfully undo the wrong or positively influence the perpetrator. If, hypothetically, you became aware of two different wrongs committed by two different people that were approximately as severe, your blaming emotions would be better directed toward a wrongdoer who would be more swayed by the communicative and motivational significance of your blaming emotions. Thus, there is something to the phenomenon where people are more likely to feel a blaming emotion in response to a wrong that directly affects them or someone they know well, rather than a wrong that affects persons with whom they have little contact. Other things equal, your motivational resources are more likely to lead to beneficial outcomes if you address concerns with which you can profitably engage.[19]

A related, but distinct, issue concerns what I will term the fairness of sanctioning a wrongdoer with a blaming emotion. We can see this notion displayed first by returning to the phenomenon of hypocrisy, earlier raised in reference to the communicative appropriateness of a blaming emotion. If you habitually commit a certain type of wrong, your right to sanction others with the blaming emotions for similar wrongs will be called into question—especially if you protest the sanction of the blaming emotions when it is applied to you. Similarly, if two people jointly undertake to commit a wrong (say, robbing someone's home) but one of them plays more of a role in planning and executing the deed than the other, it is appropriate to sanction the 'mastermind' to a greater degree with a blaming

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[19] Technological advances that give you knowledge of wrongs done to little-known people far away don't contradict this point, though they do complicate it considerably.

emotion. Thus, if you must choose where to direct your blaming emotions, fairness considerations speak to you blaming the mastermind more than the accomplice. I believe the notion of the unfairness of blaming emotions qua sanction also accounts for our appropriate reluctance to blame the victims of wrongs or injustices, even if the victims of such wrongs are complicit in, or partially responsible for, the wrongdoing. In such a situation, targeting the person who was wronged with a blaming emotion amounts to piling another bad thing on top of whatever misfortune the person has already suffered.

V – Linking Accounts of Moral Responsibility to the Three Functions

To this point, I have argued that the blaming emotions are significant for our moral responsibility practices as appraisals, communications, and sanctions. I have also argued that the appropriateness of a blaming emotion in one sense does not guarantee that the blaming emotion is appropriate in others. I have particularly focused on situations where a blaming emotion fittingly appraises another's conduct but is at the same time communicatively inappropriate or is inappropriate as a sanction. I do not take myself to have exhausted all possible appropriateness considerations that bear on these three functions, though I do hope to have captured many of the most interesting and relevant appropriateness considerations for our practices of moral responsibility. I now want to discuss several prominent accounts of moral responsibility to suggest that differing accounts of moral responsibility are motivated by attention to different ways in which the blaming emotions are significant for moral responsibility.[20]

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[20] While this project seeks to locate the source of agreements and disputes about the concept of moral responsibility, my own view is that considerations of fit are the only appropriateness conditions of the blaming emotions that bear on a person's moral

The notion that the blaming emotions involve *appraisals* of conduct as wrongful is implicit in a number of theories of moral responsibility. For example, John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza hold that someone is morally responsible for her conduct to the extent that she is an "appropriate candidate for at least some of the reactive attitudes on the basis of that behavior" (1998, 6). Fischer and Ravizza admit that "in some contexts it may not be justified or appropriate, all things considered, actually to have any reactive attitude to a particular agent" who is nonetheless morally responsible for her conduct (1998, 7).[21] Thus, their theory of moral responsibility needs a sense of appropriateness for the blaming emotions that can be apt, even if feeling a blaming emotion is not, all things considered, appropriate. I believe that the fittingness of a blaming emotion's appraisal is the notion they are searching for.

Fittingness also allows us to make sense of R.J. Wallace's idea that resentment, indignation, and anger share a distinct propositional object, namely, that "an expectation to which one holds a person has been breached" (1994, 12). The blaming emotions, Wallace believes, are fundamental to understanding the nature of moral responsibility. Coleen Macnamara has also recently noted the connection between the blaming emotions, appraisal and moral responsibility. When a person resents her brother for not helping her move as he had promised, Macnamara notes, her resentment is "a particularly deep form of moral appraisal" that responds to the meaning of the brother's insensitive action (2009, 89). This sense of appraisal is, on her view, one face of holding others morally responsible. Angela Smith has also recently urged that the fundamental question of responsibility is whether an action can be attributed to a person "in a way that makes moral appraisal, in principle,

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responsibility because these considerations circumscribe the concept of *blameworthiness*. Unfortunately, I don't have space to make that case here.
[21] On their terminology, the blaming emotions are clearly reactive attitudes.

appropriate" (2007, 470) and that negative moral appraisal, in terms of a judgment of culpability, is entailed by feeling a blaming emotion like anger, resentment, or indignation toward someone on the basis of her conduct (2007, 467).

These views about the nature of moral responsibility are all unified in taking the fittingness of the blaming emotions to be connected to ascriptions of moral responsibility. Some, like Smith, hold that the question of whether a person is morally responsible for her conduct *just is* the question of whether an appraisal like that of the blaming emotions is fitting for someone on the basis of her conduct.[22] Others, like Macnamara, hold that this is one significant aspect of our practice of holding others responsible, but that it is not the only one. Macnamara argues that another important 'face' of moral responsibility is found in communicative acts (2009, 90).

Several theorists beside Macnamara have developed accounts of moral responsibility that exploit the communicative function of the blaming emotions. Thus, Gary Watson urges "the negative reactive attitudes express a *moral* demand, a demand for reasonable regard…the reactive attitudes are incipiently forms of communication" (1993, 264). Taking up and extending Watson's idea, Michael McKenna claims that

> holding another morally responsible for doing morally wrong is a manner of communicating with her. In particular, it is a manner of responding to what she had done as on analogy with a conversation in which the blameworthy person's conduct has a significance…for her to *be* blameworthy is for her to be a fitting target of this manner of response, for her to be one with whom the relevant sort of communication is called for. (2004, 187–188)

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[22] Thus, as I read Smith's account, the question of someone's moral responsibility is a question of the fittingness of certain appraisals, but is not a question of the fittingness of emotions.

Stephen Darwall concurs that the blaming emotions are communicative. He appeals to the idea that when I feel a blaming emotion in response to you stepping on—and then continuing to stand on—my foot, my feeling the blaming emotion is in part a demand that you remove your foot from mine (Darwall 2006, 17). Even theorists like Angela Smith, who do not regard the blaming emotions as fundamental to ascriptions of moral responsibility, hold that the appraisal of another's conduct as wrongful has a communicative dimension. She writes, "Moral criticism, by its very nature, seems to address a *demand* to its target. It calls upon the agent to explain or justify her rational activity in some area, and to acknowledge fault if such a justification cannot be provided" (2006, 381).

Finally, some other accounts of moral responsibility bring the sanctioning function to the fore. So, for example, Galen Strawson holds that in asking whether people are morally responsible, we are asking if they are

> responsible for their actions in such a way that they are, without any sort of qualification, morally deserving of praise or blame or punishment or reward for them. (2002, 441)

Note how Strawson thinks the question of moral responsibility *just is* the question of whether a person is deserving of sanctions like punishment, and that he must have the sanctioning function of blame (as an attitude) in mind if he is to think that whether someone deserves blame or punishment amounts to the same question.

Echoing Strawson's claim that the question of moral responsibility is a question of deservingness "without qualification," Derk Pereboom claims that

> For an agent to be morally responsible for an action is for it to belong to her in such a way that she would deserve blame if she understood that it was morally wrong, and she would deserve credit or perhaps praise if she

understood that it was morally exemplary. The desert at issue here is basic in the sense that the agent, to be morally responsible, would deserve the blame or credit just because she has performed the action (given that she understands its moral status), and not by virtue of consequentialist considerations. (2007, 86).[23]

Also placing the sanctioning function at the fore of their analyses are Tamler Sommers and Neil Levy who, like Galen Strawson, are skeptics about desert-entailing moral responsibility.[24] Sommers claims that "we feel resentment when we feel that people have wronged us, and that they deserve blame (and perhaps punishment) for what they did" (2007, 327). Levy agrees that moral responsibility has a link to desert, but that the connection between moral responsibility and deserved sanction is less direct than Strawson and Sommers believe. On Levy's view, the thought that someone is morally responsible for wrongful acts she performs amounts to the claim that such a person no longer deserves the full protection of a right they would otherwise be entitled to: "a right against having their interests discounted in consequentialist calculations" (2011, 3). To have one's interests discounted in such calculations is to incur a cost on acting wrongfully: a sanction.

VI – Conclusion

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[23] Pereboom has been consistently advocating this account of the conditions of appropriateness for moral responsibility since the publication of *Living Without Free Will* (2001). I interpret Pereboom as being concerned with a sanction-based understanding of blame due to his emphasis on the potentially harmful effects of anger (Pereboom 2011).
[24] This 'accountability' face of moral responsibility has also been emphasized by Gary Watson (1996). Watson also characterizes another, aretaic, face of responsibility that involves beliefs or judgments about where someone's conduct falls against some standard. His discussion bears some similarity to my account of the appraisal function of the blaming emotions. However, I am uncertain whether our analyses perfectly line up.

In this paper, I've argued that the blaming emotions relate to our practices of holding people morally responsible in three different ways: appraisal, communication, and sanction. I've shown that these ways in which the blaming emotions are significant for our moral responsibility practices are themselves associated with distinct considerations of appropriateness (fittingness, communicative appropriateness, and appropriateness qua sanction) and that these different considerations can come apart from one another. A blaming emotion can be fitting, for example, but inappropriate qua communicative considerations or fitting yet inappropriate as a sanction. Finally, I've suggested that the different functions of the blaming emotions and their characteristic conditions of appropriateness are quite naturally seen as inspiring corresponding accounts of moral responsibility, itself.

I think this goes some distance toward accounting for the fact that there is so little agreement about the nature of moral responsibility, even after so much attention to it. In my view, all the accounts I've discussed get something right about the moral psychology of moral responsibility and its associated conditions of appropriateness, but they also ignore other important features of our moral responsibility practices. My analysis suggests moral responsibility may be best captured as a prototype concept: when we hold people morally responsible in normal interpersonal interactions, our responses typically conform to archetypal emotional reactions that involve all three aspects of the blaming emotions. If we aim to have a psychologically realistic picture of our moral responsibility practices, I believe we must have a tripartite theory. Thus, in response to the voluminous literature defending fittingness, communication, or sanction with *the* correct account of moral responsibility, my analysis suggests that such attempts require additional argument. There is little to be gained for supporting one account over another as the correct account of moral responsibility

without some attention to our purpose in raising the question of someone's moral responsibility in a given context.

It's also no surprise on my analysis that theorists who emphasize different emotional functions in their characterization of moral responsibility disagree about the conditions under which people are morally responsible for what they do. In particular, we find a ready division between incompatibilists, who tend to emphasize the sanctioning function, and compatibilists, who tend to emphasize the appraisal and communicative functions. Moving forward with respect to points of dispute between the camps may be aided by further attention to the moral psychology of the blaming emotions and their conditions of appropriateness. In particular, I want to suggest that if we often implicitly attend to the different conditions of emotional appropriateness in our moral lives, our intuitive judgments about when people are morally responsible will be influenced by those considerations. Further, I expect that this influence will also be present when we think about people's moral responsibility in the context of philosophical thought experiments. This is a speculative claim, but it bears investigation, particularly in light of recent work on implicit and affective psychological process.[25]

There is no question that P. F. Strawson's "Freedom and Resentment" looms large over investigations into moral responsibility. One way in which Strawson influenced current debates is by motivating the idea that attributions of moral responsibility can be helpfully understood as "natural human reactions to the good or ill will or indifference of others towards us" (P. F. Strawson 1982, 53). I have here restricted my attention to just one set of natural human reactions, namely, the blaming emotions. If my account is plausible, these

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[25] For an overview of some of the relevant empirical data, see (Bargh and Chartrand 1999).

reactions to the quality of other's wills are a matter of significant complexity. Theorizing

about moral responsibility must respect these intricacies if we are to progress.[26]

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